



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## MARLETTE APPOINTED TAG

Governor Kristi Noem announced the appointment of Brigadier General Jeffery P. Marlette to serve as the Adjutant General for the South Dakota National Guard. The appointment is effective June 8, 2019, upon the retirement of Major General Tim Reisch.

As the state's 22nd Adjutant General, Marlette will serve as the Commanding General for both the South Dakota Air and Army National Guard and will guide the preparation of approximately 4,200 Air and Army National Guard citizen Soldiers and Airman and 950 full-time federal and state employees to respond in times of state or national emergency.

"General Marlette is a leader and a public servant," said Noem. "He shares my vision for our National Guard, and together we'll work to enhance recruiting and training and ensure our troops are ready for any and all missions that come their way,"

"It's an honor to serve our state and our governor in this role," said Marlette. "We have the best soldiers and airmen in the country, and I intend to continue this tradition of success and look for ways to better prepare the men and women of the National Guard for the future missions we will be asked to undertake."

General Marlette began his military service when he enlisted in the South Dakota Army National Guard in 1980. He received his commission through the South Dakota Military Academy Officer Candidate School in 1982. In April 2007, General Marlette was named the first Commander of the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, commanding in excess of 2,200 South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers. Marlette assumed duties as Assistant Adjutant General - Army in April of 2011 where he served as the Commanding General for 3,200 soldiers.

Since 2015, Marlette has served as West River Regional Director for U.S. Senator Mike Rounds where he supports the Senator's work on the Senate Armed Services and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees.

As Adjutant General, Marlette will be responsible for formulating and implementing all policies and plans affecting Air and Army National Guard members in South Dakota. He will serve on the Governor's cabinet leading the Department of the Military.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

New Minnehaha VSO .....	2
Women Veterans Open House.....	2
Military Appreciation Month.....	3
Service Dog Visits SRSTVSO .....	4
SFVAHCS Baby Shower .....	4
VABHHCS Veteran Orientation.....	5
VABHHCS Baby Shower .....	5
WW II Veteran Honored.....	6
Nyberg's Operation Round Up.....	6
VA CIGNA Partnership .....	7
VA Microsoft Partnership .....	8
Women's Health Week .....	9
VA Mental Health.....	10
Upcoming Events .....	11



# MINNEHAHA HIRES NEW VSO

Kathy Richardson, former SDDVA state veteran service officer, has been selected as the new Minnehaha County Veterans Service Officer. Richardson started her new position last week.

Richardson's office address is 521 N. Main Avenue—Suite 201 in Sioux Falls with office hours from 8:00 am—5:00 pm. Her phone number is 605.978.5608 and her fax number is 605.367.4235. Her email address is: [krichardson@minnehahacounty.org](mailto:krichardson@minnehahacounty.org)



The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System  
proudly hosts a

## WOMEN VETERANS

### Open House

*Open to all Veterans and their family members with an interest in learning more about VA women's health services.*

**May 16, 2019 4:30-6:30 p.m.**

Healthy Snack Preparation Demonstration 5:00 p.m.

Aromatherapy Demonstration 5:30 p.m.

Mindful Relaxation Practice 6:00 p.m.

Women's Health Clinic, First Floor

Sioux Falls VA Medical Center

2501 W. 22<sup>nd</sup> St., Sioux Falls, SD

Refreshments will be served.

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

At the encouragement of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and the South Dakota Department of the Military, Governor Kristi Noem has proclaimed May as "National Military Appreciation Month," a time for all to honor, remember, recognize and appreciate those who have served in the past and those now serving, as well as their families.

"The vigilance of the members of the Armed Forces has been instrumental to the preservation of freedom, security and prosperity enjoyed by the people of this great nation," the Governor's proclamation states. "The success of the Armed Forces depends on the dedicated service of its members and their families."

National Military Appreciation Month includes: Loyalty Day on May 1, Victory in Europe Day on May 8, Military Spouse Appreciation Day on May 10, Armed Forces Day on May 18 and Memorial Day on May 27.

"It is certainly fitting to dedicate a month to consider all of the ways that members of our armed forces both past and present have earned and preserved our American way of life," said Major General Tim Reisch, who leads South Dakota's Department of the Military. "We also pay special tribute to the many contributions and tremendous support of our military family members without whom our service would be impossible."

"The days provide an opportunity to honor, remember, recognize, and appreciate those who serve and have served," said Greg Whitlock, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. "These men and women continue to play a major role in the development of our country documented through a history of uncompromising honor, dedication to duty and genuine love of country."

For generations, brave Americans have stepped forward and answered our country's call to serve in our Armed Forces. With honor and distinction, our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen fight to defend the principles upon which our country was founded. Behind these courageous Americans stand spouses, children, and parents who give up precious time with their loved ones, bearing the burden of long deployments and difficult moves, and oftentimes putting their careers on hold. During Military Family Month, we salute the families of those who proudly are a part of our Nation's unbroken chain of patriots for their unwavering devotion, and we renew our sacred vow to uphold our promise to our troops, our veterans, and their families.





# SFC PUMA VISITS TVSO OFFICE

Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Veterans Service Office has a unique visitor last week. SFC Puma, who served two tours of duty in Afghanistan, and his handler stopped by to visit TVSO Manaja Hill and his team.



To honor and support Veterans welcoming a new addition to their families in 2019, the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System proudly hosts a



## VA Baby Shower



*Open to all new Veteran parents, Veteran parents-to-be, their children and significant other/support persons. Please join us for refreshments, a chance to meet other Veteran parents and parents-to-be, education, fun, games, and gifts!*

**RSVP** by May 22, 2019 to  
Brenda Fredericks, Women Veterans Program Manager  
Manager, 605-336-3230 Ext. 6250

**June 6, 2019 6:00- 8:00 p.m.**  
**Location: Disabled American Veterans**  
**1519 W. 51st St., Sioux Falls, SD**

**VA**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# VABHHCS VETERAN ORIENTATION PROGRAM

VA Black Hills is rolling out a program to help new veterans better understand the VA system. This short informational session will help participants get the most out of their health care benefits. A Veteran Orientation Program will be offered from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month at rotating locations.

The target audience is newly enrolled veterans, but all veterans are welcome to attend. The topics covered include travel benefits, scheduling, MyHealtheVet, primary and specialty care services, program contact information, and so much more.

Veterans can pick the date and time that is convenient, and no registration is required. For more information contact VABHHCS Public Affairs at 605-720-7451.

## Upcoming Dates:

May 16, 2019—Room 133—Rapid City CBOC

June 20, 2019—Building 53, Room 102—Hot Springs

July 18, 2019—Building 145, Room 108—Fort Meade

Information about additional classes throughout the year will be available on our website calendar of events and Facebook: <https://www.blackhills.va.gov/calendar.asp> and at: <https://www.facebook.com/VABlackHills/>.



## VA Black Hills Baby Shower

This engagement is open to our Women Veterans and their families who have had babies or are expecting in 2019.

To honor and support Veterans that have welcomed or are expecting a new addition to their families in 2019, the Department of Veterans Affairs is supporting baby showers at VA sites across the country recognizing over 2,400 new Veteran parents. The following are just some of the things that parents will find at this year's VA baby shower:

- This event will encourage networking for Veteran mothers who are pregnant/new moms/ breastfeeding
- There will be door prizes, activities for children, and refreshments
- Education presentations on postpartum depression, WIC, Intimate Partner Violence, and car seat safety

Our goal is to increase awareness of VA benefits for maternity care and support Veterans and their pregnancies/babies.

**RSVP via phone by 05/01/19**

**Contact:** Heidi Dunkle, Women's Health Support Tech, (605) 347-2511 ext. 7746 & April Yantis, RN, Women's Health Nurse Navigator, (605)347-2511 ext. 7742

**Location:** Fort Meade, Bldg 90, Dakota Room

**Date:** May 15, 2019

**Time:** 6:00 pm

**\*Help Us Celebrate our VA Babies\***





## WWII HERO HONORED

This weekend family and friends of Leonard Weber gathered in Sioux Falls to help him celebrate his 98th birthday.

Joining Leonard for his celebration was SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard.

Pollard thanked Leonard for his service and presented him with SDDVA's WWII coin.

Weber served in New Guinea and Southern Philippines.

In the words of President Harry S. Truman, "Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices." Leonard, we will never forget your sacrifices nor your years of dedicated service to this great country.

SDDVA continues to work with our county and tribal veterans service officers to find all of these great heroes.



## NYBERG'S JOINS LIST OF FOUNDATION CONTRIBUTORS

Nyberg's Ace in Sioux Falls has joined the list of contributors to the State Veterans Cemetery Foundation.

Nyberg's, at all five locations, is offering a "round up" program during the month of May. Funds garnered from customers participating in the "round up" will be donated to the State Veterans Cemetery Foundation. Kudos to Nybergs and their customers.



# VA/CIGNA PARTNERSHIP

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Cigna, a global health service company, recently announced a new public private partnership to improve safety and quality of care for veterans with chronic pain, who are at risk for opioid misuse.

The partnership, which was formalized March 7, will educate veterans and their families, the public and health care providers about the following: [safe opioid use](#); improving provider and patient interactions related to opioid use; and helping to improve delivery of care and health outcomes for veterans.

“This partnership is in line with the VA’s priorities of transforming our business systems and supporting more robust partnerships with state and local communities,”

said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “By partnering with Cigna, we have extended our reach to help improve the way health care providers approach opioid use and we demonstrate our commitment to place veterans’ safety and well-being above all.”

David M. Cordani, president and CEO of Cigna, agreed. “Public-private partnerships are critical to address the opioid epidemic in the U.S.,” Cordani said. “It’s an honor and a privilege to partner with the VA to support the brave men and women who served in the United States armed forces. We look forward to sharing our resources and best practices to benefit veterans and the communities that support them.”

[VA’s Opioid Safety Initiative](#) has reduced the number of veterans prescribed an opioid by more than 50% over the past six years. With more than 75% of this reduction attributed to not starting patients newly on long-term opioid therapy, the VA is managing pain more effectively by using multiple strategies and alternative therapies, such as yoga, meditation and acupuncture. VA health care providers also participate in state prescription-drug monitoring programs and training to manage the opioid crisis.

Through the partnership, the VA and Cigna will also promote existing supportive resources, such as the [Veterans Crisis Line](#) at 800-273-8255 and Cigna’s [Veterans Support Line](#) at 855-244-6211.



## Safe and Responsible Use of Opioids for Chronic Pain

*A Patient Information Guide*



For more information, visit [VA Pain Management and Opioid Safety](#) and Cigna’s [Finding Consensus on Opioid Misuse is Critical to Overcoming It](#).

For more information on partnering with VA, visit [VA Health Partners](#).

# VA/MICROSOFT PARTNERSHIP

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Microsoft Corp. announced a new collaboration to enhance opportunities for education, recreation and therapy for veterans with mobility limitations by introducing the Xbox Adaptive Controller — a video game controller designed for people with limited mobility — in select VA rehabilitation centers around the country.

The partnership, which was formalized April 18, will provide controllers and services to veterans as part of therapeutic and rehabilitative activities aimed at challenging muscle activation and hand-eye coordination, and greater participation in social and recreational activities.

"This partnership is another step toward achieving VA's strategic goals of providing excellent customer experiences and business transformation," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The VA remains committed to offering solutions for veterans' daily life challenges."

Together, the VA and Microsoft identified an opportunity to introduce or reintroduce gaming to veterans with spinal cord injuries, amputations and neurological or other injuries at 22 VA



# Microsoft

medical centers across the United States. Microsoft is donating its Xbox Adaptive Controller, game consoles, games and other adaptive gaming equipment as part of the collaboration.

Designated VA staff will engage with veterans using the equipment and share feedback with Microsoft on therapeutic utility and the veteran experience.

"We owe so much to the service and sacrifice of our veterans, and as a company, we are committed to supporting them," said Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft. "Our Xbox Adaptive Controller was designed to make gaming more accessible to millions of people worldwide, and we're partnering with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to bring the device to veterans with limited mobility, connecting them to the games they love and the people they want to play with."

Microsoft and the VA have a long-standing strategic partnership, working together for more than 20 years to provide the best possible care and service to veterans. Gaming is a popular pastime of military personnel, and access to the Xbox Adaptive Controller in VA rehabilitation centers provides the opportunity for veterans to experience gaming's various benefits, including staying connected with friends and family across the world, building esprit de corps through competitive or cooperative gameplay and providing stress relief.

Microsoft's initial contributions will be allocated across 22 VA facilities. In addition, the controllers and other equipment will be available for Veterans to use at events hosted by VA's Office of National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events, such as the National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

For more information on partnering with VA, visit: <https://www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/index.asp>.



# WOMEN'S HEALTH WEEK

In celebration of National Women's Health Week, May 12-18, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Centers (VAMCs) across the country will host events to support women veterans and connect them with VA's health care services.

"The VA is serving nearly a half million women veterans and we want to take care of even more," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Events like these get them through the doors, so they meet VA health providers and learn firsthand about the comprehensive services and quality care the VA provides to women who have served."

Women are among the fastest growing veteran demographics, accounting for more than 30% of the increase in veterans who served between 2014 and 2018. The number of women using VA health services has tripled since 2000, growing from about 160,000 to nearly 500,000 today. The VA offers a wide range of primary care and specialty services for women veterans, such as health screenings, preconception counseling, maternity care, menopausal support and more.

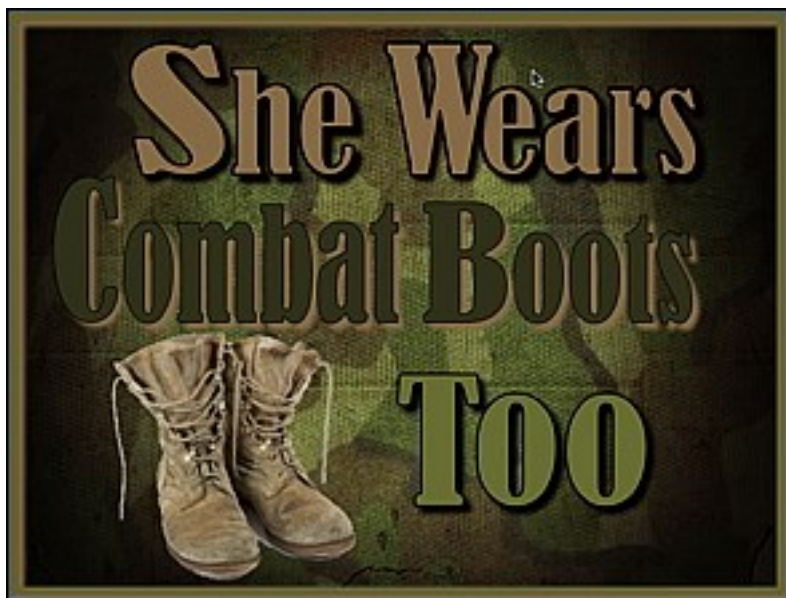
VA Medical Centers with dedicated women's health clinics will celebrate National Women's Health Week by hosting either an open house or outreach events. Veterans attending these events can speak with health providers about the broad range of services offered at their medical centers and hear from experts on topics such as maternity care and child safe homes. Tours of the clinics and educational materials will be available.

The VA is seeking broad public participation and encourages Veteran Service Organization members to participate. News media are welcome to cover these events. To learn about events at facilities in communities around the country, visit the local VAMC website or contact the public affairs officer directly.

The VA encourages women veterans not currently using [VA health care services](#) to enroll and use the benefits they have earned. Call the Women Veteran Call Center for information at 855-VA-Women (855-829-6636) for information or visit [womenshealth.va.gov](http://womenshealth.va.gov).



May 12-18, 2019



# VA LAUNCHES DIGITAL CAMPAIGN ENCOURAGING MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATIONS

In recognition of Mental Health Month in May, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is launching “[The Moment When](#)” campaign, a nationwide effort starting May 1 that will feature veterans’ personal experiences with mental health treatment and recovery.

The campaign aims to demystify mental health

treatment, build awareness of available mental health resources, and encourage family members and friends to start the conversation with a veteran going through a hard time.

“VA continues to be the nation’s vanguard in reshaping the conversation around mental health treatment and recovery,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Since May is Mental Health Month, make this the

 **May is Mental Health Month**

**MAKE THE  
CONNECTION**

moment you start the conversation with a loved one or reach out for support if you need it.”

The Moment When campaign will highlight many moments in the broader mental health recovery process: from the moment when a veteran reached out for

support, to the moment when the veteran realized treatment was working.

Throughout the month of May and beyond, VA encourages veterans and their families to visit <https://maketheconnection.net/mhm> to explore stories of recovery and find local resources.

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a Veteran in crisis, can call VCL for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, send a text message to 838255 or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat).

# The Moment When

# PARTNERS STRENGTHEN SAFETY SURVEILLANCE

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently announced an agreement that greatly improves drug safety monitoring of prescriptions, including opioids.

The agreement, which was formalized March 21, will give the VA the ability to monitor medical prescriptions issued outside the VA through Medicare Part D.

“The VA is committed to patient safety, and our robust medication surveillance systems are part of that commitment,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This agreement greatly enhances medication safety for veterans by providing better oversight of drugs that veterans may be able to obtain from both agencies.”

The VA currently has a robust system in place for medication surveillance to ensure safe use by veteran patients and the ability to analyze patient outcomes. This new agreement will enable the VA to incorporate up-to-date Medicare prescription information into its safety surveillance operations.

By incorporating prescriptions dispensed through Medicare, VA providers have access to more accurate information about the medications used by its patients.

More than five million veterans receive prescription medications through VA. With the creation of the Medicare Part D benefit, veterans dually enrolled in VA and Medicare have access to prescription benefits through both VA and Medicare, creating the potential for adverse drug interactions, duplication of use and greater risk of adverse drug events, including overdoses.

“This agreement represents a new level of information sharing between VA and CMS, which will improve care coordination and better protect our beneficiaries,” said CMS principal deputy administrator for Operations and Policy Kimberly Brandt. “Leveraging data is a key element of CMS’ efforts to combat the opioid epidemic, and we look forward to continued collaboration with the VA on this important issue.”

To learn more about the risks of opioid-related adverse events and overdose among veteran patients receiving dual prescriptions with VA and CMS, visit <https://annals.org/aim/fullarticle/2728200/dual-receipt-prescription-opioids-from-department-veterans-affairs-medicare-part>.



## FIGHTING THE OPIOID CRISIS



# UPCOMING EVENTS

May 7—Midwest Honor Flight Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—7:45 pm (CT)  
May 7—SDDVA Mini Conference—TREA (1981 Centre Street)—Rapid City—10:00 am—3:00 pm (MT)  
May 8—SDDVA Mini Conference—Post 8 American Legion (520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre—10:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)  
May 9—SDDVA Mini Conference—VFW (3601 S. Minnesota Avenue)—Sioux Falls—10:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)  
May 14—Bill Casper's Annual WW II Luncheon—TREA—Rapid City  
May 15—VABHHCS 9th Annual National VA2K—VABHHCS Campus—10:00 am (MT)  
May 15—SFVAHCS VA2K—SFVAHCS Campus—11:00 am (CT)  
May 15—VABHHCS Baby Shower—VABHHCS—Bldg 90—Dakota Room—Fort Meade—6:00 pm (MT)  
May 16—SFVAHCS Women's Health Clinic Open House—First Floor of Medical Center—4:30 pm (CT)  
May 16—VABHHCS Veterans Orientation Program (Room 133) Rapid City CBOC—4:30 pm (MT)  
May 17—Veterans Honor Concert—State Veterans Home—Hot Springs—2:00 pm (MT)  
May 17-19—DAV Convention—Hilton Garden Inn (5300 S. Grand Circle) —Sioux Falls  
May 18—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)  
May 27—MJFSVH Memorial Day Car Show—Hot Springs—9:00 am (MT)  
Jun 6—SFVAHCS 2nd Annual VA Baby Shower—DAV (1519 W. 51st Street) - Sioux Falls—6:00 pm (CT)  
Jun 6-9—American Legion State Convention—Sioux Falls Convention Center  
Jun 8—Department of SD Marine Corps League State Convention—American Legion Post 8—Pierre—10:00 am (CT)  
Jun 13-16—VFW State Convention—Dakota State University—Madison  
Jun 15—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)  
Jun 20—VABHHCS Veterans Orientation Program (Building 53—Room 102) Hot Springs—4:30 pm (MT)  
Jun 29—Veterans for Veterans Annual Poker Run—Mitchell Depot Bar and Grill—11:00 am (CT)  
Jul 17—South Dakota Veterans Council—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)  
Jul 20—PVA 5th Annual Poker Run—Thirsty Duck Bar and Grill (945 S. Marion Road) - Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)  
July 20-24—National VFW Convention—Orlando, FL  
Jul 20—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)  
Aug 3-6—DAV National Convention—Orlando, FL  
Aug 17—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)  
Aug 29—Veterans Day at the Fair  
Aug 26-29—SDDVA Benefit School  
Sep 21—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)  
Sep 21—Davison County Veterans Wellness and Benefit Fair—Mitchell Corn Palace—8:00 am—4:30 pm (CT)

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer

South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

Soldiers and Sailors Building - 425 E Capitol Avenue

Pierre, SD 57501

Phone: 605-773-8242

E-mail address: [audry.ricketts@state.sd.us](mailto:audry.ricketts@state.sd.us)

